



Saguaro National Park News Release

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NATURALIZATION CEREMONY HELD AT SAGUARO NATIONAL PARK ***Embrace Citizenship – Experience America Through Your National Parks***

Tucson, AZ – Twenty people from 20 countries became United States citizens in ceremonies held on the Fourth of July at Saguaro National Park, Tucson Mountain District. The ceremonies were held in partnership with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

The Honorable Judge Bruce G. Macdonald presided over the naturalization ceremony, one of 95 held nationwide, this week for an estimated 7,800 new citizens.

“Our nation’s birthday is such a fitting and deeply patriotic day to become a new United States citizen,” said Scott Stonum, Saguaro National Park’s Acting Superintendent. “What could possibly be more American than becoming an American citizen on the Fourth of July? And what could be even more American than becoming an American citizen in a National Park?”

Over 100 family and friends joined the citizen candidates from Azerbaijan, Benin, Bhutan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cameroon, Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Mexico, Palestine, Pakistan, Philippines, Russia, Rwanda, Somalia, Togo, Turkey, Ukraine, Vietnam, and United Kingdom.

Acting Superintendent Stonum described the importance of national parks not only for recreation and renewal but also for their collective expression of who we are as a nation. These parks are a collective expression of where we have been, what sacrifices have been made to get here, and how our values have been forged – they tell the stories of “We the People.” As examples, he pointed to Independence Hall in Philadelphia, Gettysburg, the Women’s National Historic Park, Ellis Island, and the Vietnam Memorial – all now part of the national park system and important sites in United States history.

As part of the ceremony, new citizens and their families were invited to share their thoughts with the others in the room. “I am proud to already be an American citizen and I am even more proud that now my dad is an American citizen too,” remarked one young man from the audience.

“As this room so wonderfully demonstrates, we are a nation of immigrants,” remarked Judge Macdonald. Though acknowledging that our nation has come together as a melting pot, blending traditions into our culture and accepting one form of governance, he encouraged the new citizens to hold on to their culture, their traditions, their languages and their religious faith, stating, “No one should ask you to give that up.” The judge also encouraged the citizens to embrace their rights as

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The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

citizens and to use their votes as their voice in our political process and to sit on a jury of peers as part of our justice system.

The National Park Service and USCIS have a formal partnership enhancing citizenship ceremonies by holding them in national parks throughout the country. The agreement helps introduce new citizens to some of the nation's most significant natural resources and cultural heritage sites. These historic and picturesque sites provide an ideal backdrop for citizenship ceremonies, where new citizens can learn about and reflect on American identity and the responsibilities of citizenship.

After the ceremonies, the new citizens and their friends and families celebrated in the Red Hills Visitor Center. Park volunteers served cake and refreshments, generously donated by Friends of Saguaro, the non-profit fundraising partner of the park. This is the fourth Naturalization Ceremony hosted by Saguaro National Park which has become an annual 4th of July park tradition with the support and cooperation of USCIS.

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